Log Rolling on the Charles

MEMORIES OF A HOSTESS. By Mrs. James T. Field. Atlantic Monthly Press.

A Review By WALTER PRITCHARD EATON.

EVERY now and then somebody in Boston taps a new source of supply for reminiscences of the Hub's eminent Victorians, and the Atlantic Monthly Press brings out another book to people with phantoms for a brief moment the slopes of Beacon Hill. It is a wistful pastime, one would suppose, for Bostonians, but they seem to enjoy it. Others, too, can enjoy it when the source of supply is the diary of Mrs. James T. Fields, who for many years was the Boswell not to a single Dr. Johnson but to a city full of them. When Mrs. Fields died in 1915 she bequeathed to M. A. DeWolfe Howe a great mass of unprinted matter, which he has now drawn upon for a book called "Memories of a Hostess," a much kinder title, surely, than the one we have set down at the head of this paper. So far as Mrs. Fields is concerned, too, it is a much fairer one, for we have never yet seen so much as a line in her journals to indicate that she couldn't and didn't appreciate any one of worth who came her way. None the less, her very fairness and fulness of entry in her diaries enables us to see how full the Charles must have been in those days of floating logs. As full, perhaps, as Forty-fourth street, New York, to-day in front of the Hotel Algonquin.

Alas, that wonderful old house on the water side of Charles street, where Mrs. Fields lived for more than half a century, is no more. A huge garage now stands there. New York is not the only city where the old order changes. The present writer well remembers going to see Mrs. Fields, or perhaps it was her companion after her widowhood, Sarah Orne Jewett, in the year 1901, to secure some sort of a newspaper interview. It should have been a brief and simple matter, but it wasn't, because even so late in life, and to an unknown cub reporter, Mrs. Fields's instinct of hospitality was unfailing—and her love of good talk. The young reporter sat in the long living room surrounded by such a cloud of witnesses as would make the mouth of any collector water till the red winter sunset had almost paled to night over the Charles River Basin and heard the dear old lady chat of men and women—but specially men!—who had been the great ones of his childhood. It was an unforgetable experience, and if he now speaks of those great ones who in the sixties and seventies crowded the Fields hospitable house as log rollers it isn't because he lacks reverence for Mrs. Fields, or even for them. In fact, being himself a Bostonian, he might get rather peevish if some mere New Yorker spoke thus of them!

Nevertheless, they were just that, and sometimes quite consciously so. Any one who fancies that there is something new about literary log rolling, something peculiar to the American Poetry Society or the "Vicious Circle" of the Hotel Algonquin, and something mean and small which great ones would shrink from, is strongly advised to read "The Memories of a Hostess."

Dr. Hayes of Arctic fame visited the Saturday Club as a guest in 1867. Of him Mrs. Fields says with great vividness: "He wears a corrugated face and his slender, spirited figure shows him the man for such resolves and expeditions." But still we learn that he was not the chief talker; nor did George William Curtis and Petroleum V. Nasby, the other guests of honor, apparently say much of anything. "Dr. Holmes was in great mood for talk, but Lowell was critical, and interrupted him frequently." We further learn that this rather annoyed Dr. Holmes.

The outspoken Tom Appleton, brother-in-law of Longfellow, who had a fashion of speaking his mind, once remarked to Mrs. Fields, in 1870, "What is Boston going to do when these fellows die who give it honor now, Longfellow, Holmes, and the rest? They can't live forever, and with them its glory will depart without it is sustained by a foundation for art in other directions. Harvard University will do something to keep it up, but not much." These words have proved remarkably prophetic, but there is no indication that they ruffled the placid waters of the Frog Pond when they were spoken.

Curiously enough, our dear, genial autocrat emerges in this book as the most consistent log roller and Brahmin. Invited to meet Joe Jefferson and William Warren, two of our greatest actors, Holmes kept talking of "you actors" and "you gentlemen of the stage," till Longfellow, much perturbed, tried to change the conversation. One prefers the attitude of Mrs. Fields toward Fechter. "We do not know what his life has been, and we will not ask; that does not rest with us; but he is a very fine artist."

Longfellow, by the way, would not go to see Ristori, not because he disapproved of her or the theater, but because "he does not face tragedy before a crowd." How pregnant this little reference! It seems ludicrous at first, till we recall that Longfellow, with his white hair and beard, was as well known to every person in the Boston of those days as the State House itself. Our leading poet to-day (whoever he is) could go to any theater in New York and not a soul would know him. He could show all the emotion he cared to, and it would not be a public exhibition. It is difficult to-day to be as self-conscious as were the eminent Victorians of Boston.

Hawthorne was not socially all he should be. Mrs. Fields was amused by the remark of a Salem aristocrat—"Yes, Mr. Hawthorne was born in Salem, but we never knew anything about him." What emerges from this book regarding Emerson is a sense of his uncanny critical powers. He told Lowell that Lowell's humorous poems were first rate, but that his serious poetry wasn't so much. Lowell didn't relish the remark. Yet time has vindicated it. Again, after Emerson was persuaded to come to Boston and hear Dickens read, he was amazed at the perfect histrionic artistry of the man. Finally, he said, "I am afraid he has too much talent for his genius. . . . He is too consummate an artist to have a thread of nature left. He daunts me. I have not the key."

Literary life in New York in 1922 as a visiting English celebrity sees it. From "Timothy Tubby's Journal" (George H. Doran Co.).

In that remark, which struck Mrs. Fields, who adored Dickens, as cryptic, there is certainly the germ of the world's later estimate of the great novelist.

Holmes never made a remark like that.

Nor would Holmes, we fancy, have relished as much as Mrs. Fields did the wit of Henry Clapp, that New York Bohemian, who sat beside Dickens's friend Dolby at the newspaper dinner given to Dickens at Delmonico's, and at which Horace Greeley presided. Greeley, he said, was a self-made man who worshiped his creator. He also told Dolby that nothing gave him so high an idea of Dickens's genius as the fact that he created Uriah Heep without knowing a certain Mr. Young, present that evening, and Micawber without knowing himself (Clapp). Of a certain critic then in vogue he said, "He aims at nothing and always hits the mark precisely." And of a certain pompous clergyman present he remarked, "He is continually looking for a vacancy in the Trinity."

We fancy Mr. Dolby had a pretty good time at that dinner.

Still, Henry Clapp was an impecunious Bohemian, and Dr. Holmes lived on Beacon street. In the early 70s William Morris Hunt had a studio in Boston. The life there drove him to poetry. This is the poem he wrote and sang to the tune of "Yankee Doodle":

> Boston is a hilly place;
> People all are brothers-in-law;
> If you or I want something done
> They treat us then like mothers-in-law.

It can certainly be said of this effort that it contains more truth than poetry. Boston's eminent Victorians were—Bostonians. They admired and praised one another's work because they found it good, to be sure, but they were also bound by a community of interests quite outside literature; they represented for the most part a common point of view, and even so socially correct a person as Wendell Phillips could feel the horns of the herd when he tried to jump the pasture. There was no conspiracy about their log rolling. There seldom is about any literary log rolling. It results from a community of interest, a common point of view, a social grouping. That was true in Boston in the 60s. It is true in New York to-day.

Which is only another way of saying that if you want to be petted and praised stick to some kind of a herd. Don't go off browsing by yourself. It is too late to be born on Beacon Hill, but you can still eat at the Algonquin.

The Great Autumn Game

A Review By DONALD G. HERRING.

FOOTBALL AND HOW TO WATCH IT. By Percy D. Haughton. Boston: Marshall Jones Company.

PERCY HAUGHTON while head coach at Harvard produced two masterpieces, the Crimson elevens of 1914 and 1915. After reading Haughton's new book on football it is easy to understand how he came to develop these two great teams. Granted as true that these two elevens were composed of individual stars, who could scarcely help playing good football without any coach at all, the fundamental reason why these two teams were supremely great was the orderly, keenly analytical, practically constructive mind of their coach.

Haughton's book is avowedly designed for the average spectator. His readers, whether average spectator or professional coach, cannot but agree with the hope expressed in the concluding paragraph of the author's preface that "by the sacrifice of many important details he has produced a clear description of the subject in its broadest scope, and that this book may add materially to the enjoyment of the many thousands of spectators who witness the game of American football." The present reviewer will go further. This book will enable any player, or coach, to synthesize the scattered and—it may be—confused elements of his football knowledge, to place in true perspective the fundamentals of the game. This little book of about two hundred pages makes me hunger for more, for the larger, more advanced work that Haughton could write so well. Will he ever do it?

The book contains ten chapters, the first of which is quite the longest and most important. This is a brief chapter, historical in nature, on "The fifty-year battle between the offense and defense." There is another chapter on "Pre-season preparation," as well as one entitled "The campaign." This latter by implication is a description of the Harvard football organization from the executive standpoint. A chapter on the "Medical aspect of the game" makes it clear that, at any institution with a well organized system, no risks of serious injury to the players are ever countenanced by the coaches. "The intelligence department" is a chapter devoted to "scouting." Then come in order chapters on "The attack" and "The defense." These two chapters contain perhaps more technical writing than any others in the book, with the possible exception of the first chapter. Perhaps for this reason these two chapters interested the reviewer more than most of the others. They will repay careful study by many who believe that they themselves already know almost all there is to know of the science of football. The concluding chapter, "The wherefore of football," is a soundly reasoned apologia for the game, interesting, free from prejudice and, to my mind, convincing.

The meat of the book is contained in the opening chapter entitled, "How to watch and understand football." More than half of the forty excellent plates and all four diagrams, illustrating the four chief formations of the game, both offensive and defensive, are to be found in this opening chapter. If space would permit I could quote whole pages at a time. But, if any particularly choice bits are to be selected to illustrate how well the book fulfills its purpose of educating the average spectator, they might best be pages 11-25, 52-59 and 161-164. Herein are set forth, both in text and in pictorial form, the best possible analysis of various "formations" and "plays" and their interrelation. Most excellent photographs illustrate just how and why certain plays "went" for gains or losses. These photographs constitute one of the most valuable single features of the book. Each of them has a detailed explanation of all points referred to in the text, and every item about which there might be the slightest doubt or conflicting opinion is thus made doubly clear.

I cannot resist quoting some choice

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